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FM AMEMBASSY BELMOPAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0340  
INFO RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0027

UNCLAS BELMOPAN 000179

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR DS/IP/WHA, DS/DSS/ITA, DS/DSS/OSAC,  
DEPT FOR CA/OCS, WHA/CEN - Jason Mack

GUATEMALA FOR RSO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [BH](#)

SUBJECT: BELMOPAN: PLANNED PROTESTS AND STRIKE SCHEDULED

REF: 05 Belize 55

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Belize's national unions have planned a protest at the Belize National Assembly this morning, March 16, 2007, during scheduled budget debates. Radio announcements last night stated the nationwide strikes that had been discussed would also commence. While the size of the protest is not known and should not be violent, it is of concern because the last protest of this type in 2005 turned violent (REFTEL). The Embassy is now located in Belmopan, approximately 1 km from the planned protest site. In planning for the contingency of the protest turning violent and/or moving toward the Embassy, Mission members and families have been instructed as to precautions and phased reactions. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) The strikes and protests have been threatened for some time, and stem from the firing of Belize Telephone Limited (BTL) employees, and then the union representative. Various unions' issues have mushroomed to the current condition. Utility strikes will interrupt telephone traffic; the impact of other utility strikes will depend on the length of time: the effect of short term strikes could be mitigated by Embassy and Housing Compound backup generators, fuel and water reserves.

3. (U) The last time a protest turned violent was in Belmopan; since the Embassy's recent move to Belmopan, today's event is more a security concern. While the likelihood of violence is low, as is the chance of the protest moving the approximate 1 km to the Embassy, planning for the possibility began as soon as the protest was announced.

3. (SBU) A previous potential protest prompted a Security Notice, as has the one scheduled for today. The increased likelihood of today's protest combined with announced strikes prompted reaction plans being briefed to Surveillance Detection and Local Guards, and family members being briefed. The protest will be monitored, and if movement towards the Embassy or Housing Compound begins, staged reactions will occur. All actions will be coordinated with local police. The contracted local guard force has been briefed on their required actions.

4. (U) POC is RSO Patrick Harms at 011-501-822-4011 ext 4007.

DIETER